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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Right to development and inequalities

Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) welcomes the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to development Mr. Alfarargi on the theme of inequalities in connection with the right to development[1]. We truly believe that inequality is one of the main problems that affects our societies and the perspective of sustainable development and for this reason we appreciate the efforts made by Mr. Alfaragi to provide the opportunity to broaden to our consideration into.

Inequalities and right to development are strictly related. The consequences of inequalities threaten the enjoyment of the right to development. Recognizing that societies cannot reach full potential if all the segments of the society are excluded from participating in, contributing to and benefiting from economic, social, cultural and political development is the first step to combat inequalities[2]. It is a known fact that inequality not only undermines development in an economic dimension, but it also threatens democratic life, social cohesion and resources redistribution.[3]

When we talk about inequalities in the context of development, income inequality often is one of the principal points to be discussed. Inequalities within countries keep raising and, according to World Inequality Report 2018, 'the top 1% of the richest individuals in the world earn twice as much as growth as the bottom 50% individuals since 1980'[4] and 'the richest 1% of the world's population now control up to 40% of global assets, while the poorest half owns just 1%'[5]. The poorest 10% earns only between 2% and 7% of total global income. Economic inequality causes the perpetuation of poverty and social exclusion and, thus, creates gaps in the access to health, education, housing and other services essential to the enjoyment of economic and social rights. Extreme inequality, instead, can undermine opportunities for political participation and accountability[6]. Nevertheless, income inequality is not the only type of inequality which hinders the realization of the right to development but there are also the so-called horizontal inequalities, e.g. sex-based inequalities or race-based inequalities.

We live in a world of plenty. Yet, for hundreds of people across the world, this is also a period of deprivation. The challenge of today is both to address the deepening inequalities and persisting poverty and to ensure a life of dignity for all. Thus, fighting against inequality is probably one of the biggest challenges of our time and it needs to be addressed through the realization of the right to development and the sustainable development approach.

Reducing inequalities within and among countries is also one of the objectives of the Agenda 2030 under the Sustainable Development Goal 10. Some criticisms were made towards the indicators used to measure inequality. For example, indicator 10.1 addresses economic inequalities and poverty[7]. Nevertheless, it focuses on the bottom 40% of the population but doesn't take into consideration the gap which exists between the bottom 40% and the top 10%[8]. Moreover, these indicators, as underlined by the Special Rapporteur in his report, are not enough to assess the reduction of inequalities. In fact, these indicators 'are insufficient to track progress in eliminating discriminatory policies and practises and promoting legislations, policies and actions in this regard'[9].
Inequality is rising both within States and internationally and the Right to Development and its implementation plays a fundamental role in addressing inequalities.

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[1] UN General Assembly, *Report Special Rapporteur on the right to development*, A/HRC/39/51 (5 July 2018)

[2] UN General Assembly, *The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives, and protecting the planet: Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda*, A/69/700 (4 December 2014). Available from http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/reports/SG_Synthesis_Report_Road_to_Dignity_by_2 030.pdf.

[3] World Bank Group, *World Development Report 2017: Governance and the Law*, pp. 10 and 32.

[4] The World Inequality Lab (2018). *World Inequality Report 2018*

[5] United Nations, *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1 (21 October 2015), Goal 10

[6] Ignacio Saiz & Kate Donald (2017) Tackling inequality through the Sustainable Development Goals: human rights in practice, The International Journal of Human Rights, 21:8, 1029-1049

[7] UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*,). Available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/57b6e3e44.html, Goal 10.1 'growth rates of household expenditure or income per capita among the bottom 40 per cent of the population and the total population'

[8] T. Winkler & Carmel Williams (2017), *The Sustainable Development Goals and human rights: a critical early review*, The International Journal of Human Rights, 21:8, 1023-1028

[9] UN General Assembly, *Report Special Rapporteur on the right to development*, A/HRC/39/51, (5 July 2018)

The Declaration on the Right to Development, in fact, places responsibilities on States and the international community in the creation of enabling conditions for a more equitable and prosperous society (art.4.1). States should adopt policies on three different levels:

1. Through global partnerships and the promotion of friendly international relations and cooperation among States[10];
2. Acting individually by adopting and implementing policies that affect persons not strictly within their jurisdiction;
3. "Acting individually as they formulate national development policies and programmes affecting persons within their jurisdiction"[11].

Nevertheless, participation, empowerment and accountability must also become components of the development process necessary to address inequality. As stated in articles 2.3 and 8.2 of the Declaration on the Right to Development, participatory process is of utmost importance in all development-related processes at all levels. States, on the one side, are obliged to design development policies through a process of participation and, on the other side, they 'should encourage popular participation in all spheres as an important factor in development and in the full realization of all human rights'[12]. The entitlement of participation as in the Declaration wants to advance social inclusion, by promoting the central role of individuals and peoples in the decision making and in the assessment of the development policies.

We should bear in mind, nevertheless, that the Right to Development places the emphasis not only on the equality of rights but also on equity which is a concept that goes far beyond the fair redistribution of benefits – as stated in article 2.3 – but also calls for the creation of equal opportunities. The terms equality and equity are sometimes used interchangeably, which can lead to confusion because while these concepts are related, there are also important distinctions between them. The first indicates the state or quality of being equal; the second instead the quality of being fair or impartial or fairness.

In addressing inequality across the globe, not only the Right to Development recalls on the duties of States and the international community, but also the proposed right to International Solidarity can come to help, to the extent in which both rights can create "a normative bridge [which] connects the world's peoples, in that it stresses global justice and equitable international order for all"[13].

Against this backdrop, APG23 would also like to make the following further general recommendations:

1. We invite States and international organizations to measure progress in tackling inequality accurately;

2. We recommend States to adopt national and international policies to narrow the disparities and give equal opportunities;

3. We invite States to incorporate active, free and meaningful participation, accountability and empowerment of individuals and marginalized groups in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development programmes;

4. We call all the State to endeavour their commitment to ensuring inclusive and participatory processes in order to leave no one behind and bearing in mind the Goal 10 of the 2030 Agenda to achieve equality of opportunity for more equitable development and universal access to the elements of development for all people;

5. We call on States, UN agencies and mandate holders to assess and address the impacts of policies on the achievement of SDG10.

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[10] Kunanayakam T. (2013) 'The Declaration on the Right to Development in the context of United Nations standard-setting, in *Realizing the Right to Development*, OHCHR, HR/PUB/12/4

[11] UN General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Right to development*, A/HRC/39/18 (10 July 2018). Available from https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/209/84/PDF/G1820984.pdf?OpenElement

[12] UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Right to Development*, A/RES/41/128, (4 December 1986), article 8.2

[13] Puvimanasinghe S. (2013) International solidarity in an interdependent world, in *Realizing the Right to Development*, OHCHR, HR/PUB/12/4 available from https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Solidarity/DraftDeclarationRightInternationalSolidarity.pdf

Humanity has to face economic, climate change, energy as well as values crisis that are moving towards an even more decisive increase in inequalities both in developing and western countries.

The wisdom of the right to development together with the right to international solidarity and the functioning of the 2030 Agenda represent valid and effective instruments to achieve a more equitable development and universal access to the elements of development for all people.

Time has come to leave no one behind, and to eradicate all forms of discrimination, for a meaningful participation for all human beings to enjoy an integral development that consists in social, cultural, political and spiritual development.